

SECRET

20

25X1

No. 0654/67

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
12 June 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Indian Reaction to the Middle East Crisis

Summary

The Indian Government has given strong and continuing public and diplomatic support to the UAR since the beginning of the Near East crisis. Maintenance of close relations with Nasir has long been an article of faith for Indian foreign policy makers, and the disruption of India's major economic artery through the Suez Canal evokes considerable consternation in New Delhi. Our evidence, however, indicates that Indian support for the UAR has been only verbal and diplomatic and basically intended to be moderate rather than incitive of conflict in the Near East.

25X1

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence.

State Dept. review completed

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

India and the UNEF Withdrawal

[redacted]
[redacted] Responsi-
ble Indian Foreign Ministry officials have repeatedly
and categorically denied that India had any advance
knowledge of Nasir's plans. [redacted]
[redacted]

25X1

25X1

Rumors of Indian complicity in Nasir's schemes have
also been rife at the UN, although in view of the
long-standing close relations between India, the
UAR, and Yugoslavia, this is not surprising.

The Attitude in New Delhi

2. The Indian official response to the rapidly
developing Near East crisis, while not inflammatory
in substance, was nevertheless cast in terms favor-
able to the UAR. The Indians, at least during the
initial stages of the crisis, appear to have accepted
Nasir's rationale and claims at face value. [redacted]
[redacted]

25X1

3. Even after Nasir's request that the UNEF
be withdrawn had been implemented and the Gulf of
Aqaba closed to Israeli ships, the Indian posture
remained staunchly pro-UAR. Thus, for instance,
Foreign Minister Chagla in a statement before Par-
liament on 25 May said that India "appreciated the
reasons which have impelled the UAR to ask for the
withdrawal of UNEF" and that "Indian troops could
not remain a part of UNEF without UAR approval."

-2-

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

Concerning the Gulf of Aqaba, Chagla stated that, consistent with the position India had taken as far back as 1957, "the Gulf of Aqaba is an inland sea and entry to the gulf lies within the territorial waters of the UAR and Saudi Arabia."

4. There are some indications that the whole-hearted Indian support for the UAR may have been tempered somewhat as the danger of war in the Near East became increasingly evident.

25X1

5. After the war actually broke out, however, the Indians lost no time in denouncing Israel as the aggressor. Addressing Parliament on 6 June, Prime Minister Gandhi stated that, on the basis of available information, there could be "no doubt" that Israel had escalated the situation into armed conflict. Again aligning her government with the UAR, the prime minister declared India was making earnest efforts for a cease-fire and withdrawal of all armed forces to 4 June positions. In part, this public condemnation of Israel appears to have been due to the consistent Indian acceptance of the UAR propaganda line. However, the death of several soldiers with the Indian forces in the UNEF may have influenced the prime minister's decision. In the same speech in Parliament, she stated that the attacks on Indian UNEF personnel were "deliberate and without provocation" despite clear and unmistakable UN markings.

25X1

6. Despite the otherwise strong pro-UAR posture assumed by the Indian Government throughout the

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

[REDACTED]

Near East crisis, Indian Foreign Ministry officials privately have accepted the truth of US denials of military involvement. Foreign Minister Chagla also told Ambassador Bowles that he would try to make a public statement accepting the validity of US statements of military noninvolvement, but nothing has come of this thus far.

7. The Near East crisis has created the unusual situation in India in which a large and influential portion of the press is highly critical of the government's policy on a major international issue. Several of the most influential English and vernacular papers have accused the government from the beginning of the crisis of abandoning traditional nonalignment, following outdated Krishna Menon policies, and allowing the UAR undue influence over Indian policy making. With the exception of the Communists, the opposition parties also have been highly critical of the government's position. Some moderates within the government, especially Deputy Prime Minister Morarji Desai, may also oppose the government's stance on the Near East, although anti-West elements such as Minister of Commerce Dinesh Singh--known to be a close adviser to Mrs. Gandhi on foreign affairs--appear to have the prime minister's ear at this time.

The Indian Attitude at the United Nations

8. The statements and actions of the Indian delegation at the Security Council (India is a nonpermanent member of the council) regarding the Arab-Israeli crisis have been consistently pro-Arab and frequently at odds with US policy. Support for the Arabs, specifically for the UAR, has been so blatant that on 2 June a member of the US delegation in New York, in conversation with the Indian Permanent Representative, charged the Indians with having aligned themselves even more closely to the UAR than had the Soviets. The record speaks for itself.

9. Following the UAR's announced decision on 22 May to close the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, intensive consultations began among Security Council members. On 23 May, Canada and Denmark formally requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council, which was held the following day.

SECRET

25X1

25X1

11. At an informal meeting of the non-Communist members of the Security Council on 23 May, India expressed the view that a meeting of the Security Council would be likely to interfere with U Thant's efforts in Cairo and proposed postponing action until his return. When a second meeting of the non-Communist members of the Security Council was convened on 23 May, India did not attend.

25X1

12. Prior to the convening of the Security Council on 24 May, the Indian delegation attempted to mobilize support for adjourning the meeting at the outset on the grounds that it might interfere with U Thant's efforts in the UAR. When the US delegation succeeded in blocking this move, the Indian Permanent Representative shifted to seeking adjournment at the end of the meeting. This plan was frustrated when the Canadians and Danes presented a draft resolution expressing full support for the efforts of the secretary general to pacify the situation and requesting all UN members "to refrain from any step which might worsen the situation." The Indians (joined by the African and Communist members of the Security Council) then refused to engage in informal consultation on the draft resolution. Faced with this situation, the council adjourned without taking any action to await the secretary general's report.

13. On 26 May U Thant submitted a report on his trip to the Near East. Informal consultation among members of the Security Council resumed prior to the convening of the council on 29 May. A Danish draft

-5-

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

resolution which supported the secretary general's appeal for peace and asked all parties to "forgo belligerence" brought a "personal suggestion" from the Indian Representative that the two words be deleted. When the formal meeting of the Security Council met on 29 May, the US and UK delegates stressed the view that the term "forgo belligerence" meant, in the context of the Aqaba problem, forgoing any blockade of the gulf during a proposed breathing spell. The Indian Representative immediately challenged this interpretation, supported the UAR position on the Gulf of Aqaba, and said any arrangement would have to be "within the framework" of UAR sovereignty.

25X1

14. At the Security Council meeting on 31 May, the UAR introduced a draft resolution which stressed the reactivation of the Egyptian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission (EIMAC), in which Israel had not participated since 1956. The UAR took the position that the blockade was a legitimate exercise of UAR sovereignty and the council should concern itself with reactivation of EIMAC. The Indian delegate gave the resolution unqualified support and announced his intention to press the UAR resolution to a vote. (Apparently, cooler heads prevailed in New Delhi as the resolution was never pushed by the Indians.)

15. On 1 June, the Indians submitted to the other nonpermanent members a draft resolution calling for "restraint" but not including the term "forgo belligerence." In answer to a direct question, the Indian Permanent Representative stated that his resolution was designed to fix the status quo as is, i.e., with the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba in effect. In commenting on the draft Indian resolution, the US delegation to the UN expressed the view that the draft had been fully coordinated with the UAR.

-6-

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

16. Following the outbreak of the war on 5 June, the Security Council president (Tabor of Denmark) had hoped to achieve an immediate agreement on a simple cease-fire resolution. During a brief recess, however, the Indians circulated a draft resolution calling for a cease-fire and withdrawal of all troops to positions occupied on 4 June. This would have given implicit legitimization to the UAR moves on and after 22 May.

25X1

17. On 10 June, following release by U Thant of a report from Syrian sources of new outbreaks of fighting along the Syrian-Israeli border, the Indian delegation circulated a draft resolution condemning Israel for a "wanton attack" on Syria. The US delegation in New York noted that the action appeared to have been taken with strong Soviet encouragement, but when it became obvious the resolution had virtually no support among council members, the Indians abandoned the move.

25X1

SECRET